



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Medicine Bow – Routt
National Forests and Thunder
Basin National Grassland

Brush Creek/Hayden District
South Hwy 130
PO Box 249
Saratoga, WY 82331-0249
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/mbr>

File Code: 1950/2360

Date: December 12, 2013

Dear Interested Party,

The Forest Service is seeking public input to help develop proposals for the West Side Snowy Range Travel Management Project. Scoping is an integral part of the environmental analysis process. It provides an opportunity for you to express opinions about site-specific areas that are being considered for possible projects or proposed actions. The purpose of scoping is to identify issues and concerns related to the proposed action(s). In addition, scoping may identify additional information and management opportunities that could be incorporated into the proposed actions, as well as formulating alternatives to the proposed actions.

ANALYSIS AREA

The Analysis Area for the West Side Snowy Range Travel Management Project is located on the west side of the Snow Range and encompasses approximately 210, 000 acres on the Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District (see map next page). The project area boundary is the Laramie RD to the south and east, and the Forest boundary on the north and west. A full legal description is available upon request.

PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

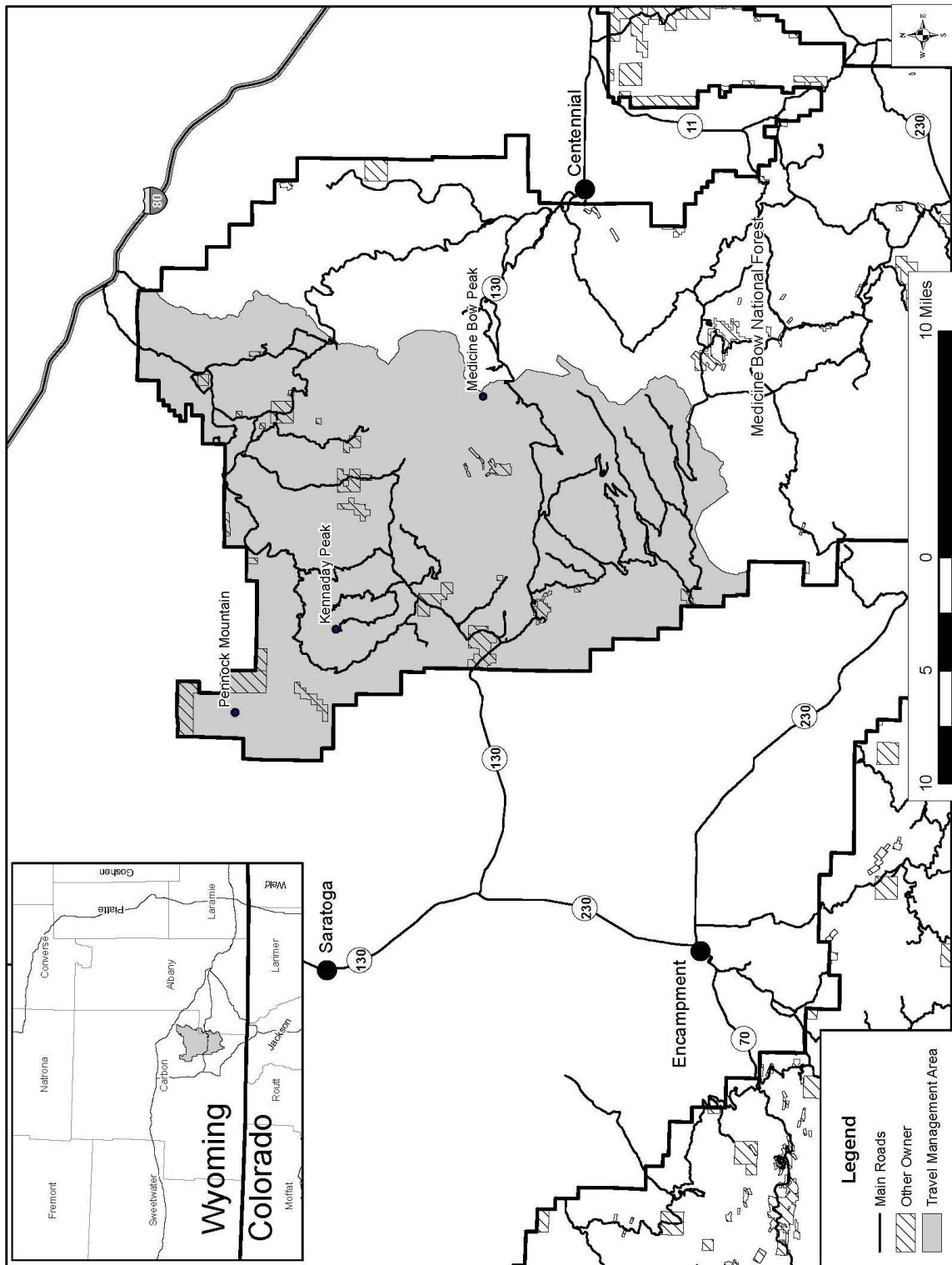
The purpose of this project is to:

- Provide safe access to and through the National Forest
- Minimize user conflicts
- Minimize travel and recreation impacts to the environment
- Provide additional ATV-only designated trails

Most importantly, there is a need to address increasing demand for both motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities while recognizing limitations in the amount of roads and trails that can be maintained. The Proposed Action and any alternatives to be developed will also need to comply with the Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule (36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 Travel Management).



Figure 1: Vicinity Map for West Side Snowy Range Travel Management Project.



SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY PROPOSED ACTIONS

The preliminary proposed actions described below have been developed for this Project based on a review of the existing condition of the area's resources, Forest Plan standards and guidelines, desired future condition, and resource management needs. An Interdisciplinary Team will analyze the effects of proposed actions to verify compliance with Forest Plan standards, guidelines, and resource objectives. It is important to note, however, that the project has not advanced far enough to identify specific roads that might be affected (i.e. open roads that might be closed, or closed roads that might become open to all or some types of vehicles). Once specific roads have been identified for a change in management, you will be provided another opportunity to comment. Additional proposed actions and alternatives are likely to be developed, based on public comments and input from resource specialists.

Preliminary Proposed Actions include:

- Determination if existing roads, and road maintenance levels, can be sustained.
- Designation of ATV/UTV¹-only trails that would enable families with children less than 16 years of age to ride together
- Change in maintenance levels of some Forest roads to better reflect current and future use. For some roads, this could be an increase in maintenance due to increased use; other roads might receive less maintenance in the future due to decreased use and/or funding.
- Seasonal closures on some roads to prevent resource damage, such as severe rutting, erosion, destruction of the road surface, etc.
- Decommissioning roads that are already causing serious resource damage or are duplicative. The type of decommissioning will probably vary by road and is expected to include road and dirt barriers, gates, obliteration of the road, signing, and similar.
- Possibly adding select user-created (unauthorized) roads into the official (authorized) road system

The purpose of including unauthorized user created roads in this project is to disclose the impacts they have on natural resources and discuss options for restoration or management. You are encouraged to help identify which, if any, of those routes should be considered by providing a detailed description and/or a map of the road. It would also be beneficial to learn why it is important to you that a current unauthorized road be added to the road system for public use. Roads needed for use by grazing and/or Special Use permittees are evaluated on a separate, case-by-case basis.

Finally, it may be important to recall that it is illegal for a member of the public to create or use any unauthorized roads and that future discovery of such routes will continue to be closed.

¹ All-Terrain Vehicle/Utility All-Terrain Vehicle

To help craft a reply, you might wish to respond to the following:

- Do you support creating new ATV/UTV-only trails that would enable families with children less than 16 years of age to ride together, and if so, where or under what conditions? Potential ATV/UTV-only trail systems are being considered in/near:
 - Racehorse Park
 - Turpin Creek
 - Stump Hollow
 - Other
 - None
- Would you support allowing full size vehicles on these trails during specific dates or seasons, such as hunting season? Doing so would preclude riders less than 16 during those times.
- Within the West Snowy Range project area, which Forest Service roads do you use most often?
- How do ATVs, UTVs, and similar “off-road” vehicles affect your recreational experience in the project area?
- How would you rate the overall level of road/trail maintenance in the project area?
- Are there any specific roads that require additional maintenance or should be modified to improve ease of use? If so, which roads and what changes would you recommend?
- Which currently unauthorized roads, if any, would you recommend for inclusion into the approved road system? Please explain why and where.
- Which roads, if any, would you recommend for decommissioning?
- Would you support the creation of partnerships to help maintain the road and trail system? Do you belong to an organization that would be willing to participate?

This is the second public outreach associated with the *West Side Snowy Range Travel Management Project*. A survey of visitors to the project area was initiated September, 2013; a copy of the survey handout is available at:

http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5438411.pdf.

Field work for this project is anticipated to be complete next Fall. A final Proposed Action, and perhaps some alternatives, will be available for additional public input at that time. I expect to make my decision by April, 2015 with implementation beginning that summer.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

You are invited to offer comments on any aspect of this project at this time. Information you provide might help refine the proposed action, identify pertinent issues related to the Proposed Action, develop alternatives or mitigation measures, and/or assist in preparing the Environmental Assessment (EA). Scoping comments will be most useful if received by January 31, 2014. Please be as specific as possible with your comments or in expressing concerns so that they can be effectively addressed. This is not the official comment period; the public will be provided an official 30-day comment period at a later time, as mentioned above. If you wish to receive project updates as they become available, please state such and provide either your mailing or email address.

Written comments should be sent to Brian Waugh, Recreation Program Manager, Brush Creek/Hayden RD, PO Box 249, Saratoga WY, 82331. Comments may also be hand delivered to our office at 2171 HWY 130 during regular business hours of 8:00a.m. to 4:30p.m. Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays. Electronic comments should be sent to: comments-rm-medicine-bow-routt-brush-creek-hayden@fs.fed.us (acceptable format for electronic comments: rtf, pdf, word).

Thank you for your interest in the current and future management of the Medicine Bow National Forest and specifically, the western side of the Snowy Range. I look forward to your thoughts.

Sincerely,

/s/ Melanie B. Fullman
MELANIE B FULLMAN
District Ranger

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